



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 17 June 1968

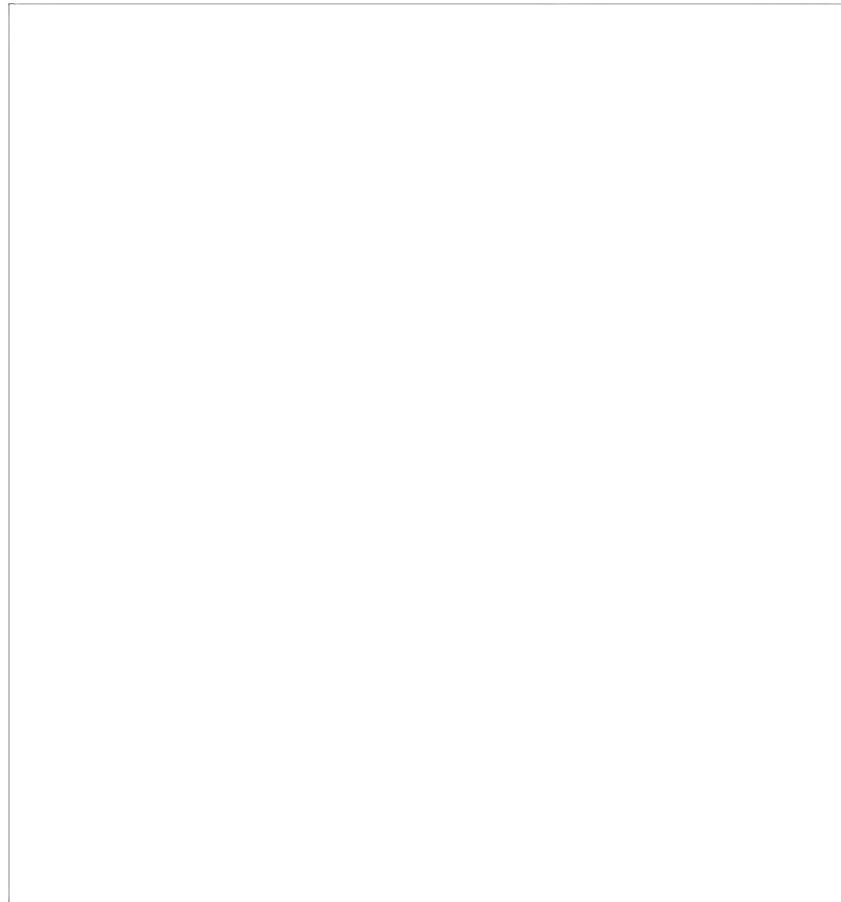


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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
17 JUNE 1968

1. South Vietnam

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2. Venezuela -
Soviet Union

The Venezuelans have seized a Soviet tug. The tug, which was towing a crane from the Black Sea to Siberia via the Panama Canal, was halted near an island off the Venezuelan coast and taken into a port near Caracas.

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We do not expect either Moscow or Caracas to treat this as a major incident, but it could set back the efforts both sides are making to improve economic and diplomatic relations.

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3. Berlin

As the West Germans and the allies seek ways of countering the new access restrictions, some differences in approach have cropped up between the two government parties in Bonn. Kiesinger's Christian Democrats apparently favor firm countermeasures against the East Germans; the Socialists are putting their emphasis on the need to shore up West Berlin's economy. Our embassy thinks the public mood leans toward the Christian Democrats' position.

"Unity Day" demonstrations commemorating the 1953 uprising are scheduled for today in West Berlin. The East Germans will be watching them closely. They are already annoyed by the morale-boosting visits to Berlin being made by high West German officials.

Pankow is getting the expected general protestations of support from Soviet media, but Moscow has not committed itself to any course of action. At the moment, the Soviets seem to be awaiting Western countermoves.

A government spokesman in Bonn has publicly acknowledged that Kiesinger is considering a trip to Washington. There still has been no decision, however.

4. Brazil

ex-President Goulart has agreed to join in a united front with the Communists. Both Goulart and the Communists, in turn, would like people to think they are backed by the reforming archbishop, Dom Helder. Goulart reportedly has already made overtures to the archbishop.

Dom Helder probably would not accept an open alliance with Goulart, much less with the Communists. He might agree to a private arrangement with Goulart, however, and this could be a big step in the spinning together of a new opposition force.

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5. Czechoslovakia

Prague has taken two steps which will not be received well in Moscow.

In an agreement signed this weekend, the Czechoslovak Communist Party in so many words renounced the "monopoly of political power" it has held since 1948. It will retain its leading role, but as long as the country's other parties stay within a vague concept of "socialism," they will be allowed to formulate their own programs. They will also participate in the drafting and implementation of national policies. The Soviets are sure to regard this as a major departure from the gospel as it is preached in Moscow.

As if this were not enough, Czechoslovakia on Saturday signed a friendship treaty with Hungary which opens the way a bit more for the eventual establishment of relations with West Germany. In his speech at the signing, Dubcek said it was in Czechoslovakia's interest to "normalize" relations with Bonn.

Dubcek, keeping one ear cocked toward Moscow, made it clear that he was not thinking of taking this step soon, however. He said in fact that there could be no diplomatic ties until East and West Germany had worked out a "realistic arrangement."

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes

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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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Hanoi Denies Times: Hanoi on 15 June took the unusual step of denying a New York Times story about the Paris talks. An English broadcast accused the Times of spreading the rumor that North Vietnam had agreed to respond to a bombing halt with "some gesture not yet made public."

"Sheer fabrication," said the North Vietnamese, adding that throughout the Paris talks their delegation had insisted that first and foremost the US must unconditionally stop its bombing and "other acts of war" before discussing other problems.

The denunciation appears to be an effort to say publicly, but on an unofficial level, that a change in the form of the US request for reciprocity will not be sufficient. The broadcast also could be aimed at quelling fears in some Communist quarters about secret deals between Hanoi and Washington.

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Delegation Woos Expatriates: The North Vietnamese negotiating team in Paris is now bending every effort to cultivate the Vietnamese community. At the party the delegation threw on 15 June to celebrate Ho Chi Minh's 78th birthday, the crowd numbered between 1,000 and 2,500 and included members of the French Communist Party as well as "diplomats from friendly countries." The birthday was last month, but the party was postponed because of the Paris disturbances.

The theme of the party--like the theme of Hanoi propaganda for the past two weeks--was Vietnamese nationalism and independence. The entertainment was traditional Vietnamese folk dancing and singing, and the speeches constituted a defense of Hanoi's right to help the South in the "struggle against American aggression and for national salvation." The main speaker of the evening was Xuan Thuy and he reportedly told his audience that "every Vietnamese whether North or South has a right and a duty to defend against foreign aggression." The occasion also served as a fund-raising benefit

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

More on Dr. Spock: Hanoi propaganda gave Dr. Spock's trial special attention Saturday. Nhan Dan, the leading party newspaper, ran an editorial, and there was a special message to the US Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam. Praising the baby doctor's "valiancy," Nhan Dan said that he represented the antiwar attitudes of millions of other Americans. His trial was termed a persecution. The editorial extended the hand of friendship to the "American people" who opposed the US policy in Vietnam.

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The special message, from the Vietnam Peace Committee, credited Dr. Spock with "great contributions to the noble humanitarian cause, and expressed the hope that the "American people" would have increased success in their "struggle for an end to US aggression in Vietnam."

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